



GETTING ALONG WITH OTHERS

AN INTRODUCTION

Specific job-skill requirements vary from job to job, but the need to get along with other people is universal. Good interpersonal skills include the willingness and ability to accept and respect others, communicate, cooperate, share and work together to complete projects, solve problems and resolve conflicts.

It's not easy to work with other people. Some individuals have annoying habits that get on your nerves. They talk too much, joke around all the time, or seem moody or argumentative. Still, it's up to you to make the best of your work situation.

Occasionally – or perhaps regularly – you'll be expected to collaborate with a team of other employees on a specific task or project. Developing real teamwork takes time and effort, but the payoffs can be huge. More ideas, greater creativity, better decisions, increased commitment, higher productivity and stronger relationships are a few of the payoffs.

Coping with Difficult People



The Know-it-All – Don't waste your time arguing with a "know-it-all." Instead, listen with interest and patience. Ask lots of questions about the person's ideas or ways of doing things. Try to slip in your own ideas through questions and comments. For example:

"Have you ever tried solving that problem by?"

"That's a good idea. We could try that, and maybe as something different we could . . . ?"

"What do you think would happen if we . . . ?"



The Tease – If someone teases you, ignore it or tease back and try not to be too bothered by the teasing. If you are bothered, try not to show it. Some people will tease you even more if they know that it bothers you. If none of these methods work, tell your supervisor or teacher about the problem. This is not the same of tattling; you're telling your supervisor something that he or she should know. Besides, it's best to discuss the problems before they get worse.



The Nosy Questioner – Don't be surprised to find yourself working with at least one person who asks all kinds of unwelcome questions. You don't have to answer questions about your personal life. Here are some possible responses:

"Why do you ask?"

"I'd rather not say?"

"I prefer not to answer personal questions."



The Gossip – Rumours make their rounds in most organizations and usually, they're harmless. Unfortunately though, most organizations also have their "professional rumormongers" – individuals who seem to delight in whispering behind people's backs, spreading gossip and creating tension and turmoil. Whether they do it for power, attention, revenge or out of jealousy, you may have to deal with their actions. Don't repeat rumours or gossip. Better yet, do your part to stop it. One way is to say, "I've heard that too, but it's only a rumour." If you are a victim of gossip, try to ignore it – rumours tend to die quickly. If the rumour is vicious or interferes with your ability to do your job, talk to your supervisor or teacher.



Sexual Harassment – Comments, invitations and touching become harassment the *very first time* they make you feel uncomfortable or interfere with your ability to do your job. If a person comes on to you by using familiar language ("sweetheart, cutie, honey") tell the person that you don't like those terms and want to be addressed by your name. Be assertive the *first time* it happens. If a person hints at "getting together," change the subject immediately to something business-related. If the hint becomes an invitation, firmly and clearly state that you're not interested. Don't waste time explaining yourself. No is no! If the behaviour continues, tell your supervisor or teacher.



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ACCEPTING CRITICISM

Criticism does not have to be a bad thing. Constructive criticism is a suggestion for improvement. Criticism can help you be better at your job. Read the stories below. What will happen to each work if the boss does not make a suggestion for improvement?

1. Tom is a very good worker. On Tuesday, he was sick. He forgot to call in to work. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO TOM IF HIS BOSS DOESN'T GIVE HIM SOME CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM?

2. Laurie gets paid for how much she sells. She takes long breaks and comes to work late. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO LAURIE IF HER BOSS DOESN'T SPEAK WITH HER?

3. Cassandra often forgets to punch out from work. Sometimes her boss is not sure how many hours she has worked. WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO CASSANDRA IF HER BOSS DOESN'T GIVE HER SOME CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM?

Now you can see how constructive criticism can help. Some people do not take criticism well. Some workers:

BLAME SOMEONE ELSE – “It’s Joe’s Fault!”

ARGUE THAT IT’S NOT THEIR FAULT – “I did not do it wrong.”

MAKE EXCUSES – “If this cash register was any good, I’d be faster.”

COMPLAIN ABOUT BEING PICKED ON – “You always get mad at me.”

POUT – “Won’t talk at all.”



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THEY COULDN'T ACCEPT CRITICISM

Read each story below. Then decide how each worker acted when criticized. Each person either:

- BLAMED SOMEONE ELSE
- ARGUED THAT IT WAS NOT HIS OR HER FAULT
- MADE EXCUSES
- POUTED
- COMPLAINED ABOUT BEING PICKED ON

Beside each story, write down how each person acted (the first one is done for you). Choose from the list above.

1. Kayla said, "I would have swept the floor last night, but I couldn't find the broom."	<i>made excuses</i>
2. A worker said to Carla, "When you were late today, I had to do your job and mine too." Carla said, "Why does everyone always pick on me?"	
3. Bryce did not come to work Friday night. He told his boss, "Josh was supposed to call me and tell me my schedule. But he never called."	
4. Gillian's boss told her she should be friendlier to the customers. Gillian went into the back room and sat by herself.	
5. Sam's boss told him that he wrote the wrong phone message down. Sam said, "I wrote down just what the person said. I know I wrote it down all right."	

Below are some good ways to accept criticism. Write the name of a person from each story beside the answer he or she should have given.

- "Thanks for telling me. I'll listen more carefully." _____
- "You're right. I guess I didn't look for that broom very hard." _____
- "I should have checked my schedule myself. I'll do it this week." _____
- "I'm sorry about that. I'll make sure it doesn't happen again." _____
- "It's hard for me to talk to strangers. But I'll try harder." _____



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SELF QUIZ

Circle the answers that tell how you act at work or school.

HOW I ACT	#1	#2	#3
1. I gossip about my coworkers.	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
2. I am agreeable.	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
3. I am bossy.	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
4. I am friendly to co-workers.	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
5. If someone puts me down, I laugh it off.	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
6. I can take criticism without blaming others.	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
7. I try to stop gossip at work.	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
8. When I am criticized, I feel picked on.	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
9. I try to help my co-workers.	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
10. I ignore put-downs.	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
11. I ask for things in friendly way.	Usually	Sometimes	Hardly Ever

To score yourself, read the following:

Did you check any answers in Column #1? If so, you need to improve those areas.